

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

January 20, 2015

Town Hall – Main Level, Helen Nelson Conference Room

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Whit Przech at 6:00 PM.

II. Roll Call – Members present: Whit Przech, Vice Chairperson; Jim Marocchini, Dave Nagel; Sarah Jorgensen-Bucchi; and Rodney Mortensen. Others present: Members of the public; Mayor Stephen Woods; Chuck Boos, Kaestle Boos Associates; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – Roy Zartarian, 25 Stuart Street. There has been a lot placed on the Committee's plate. It has received input from the library, focus groups, the public and politicians, much of which is beyond the charge of the Committee. The Committee should apply Ockham's Razor and make the core building sound. It can deal with the space needs later. He is in favor of a complete assessment of all Town facilities. Modifications to Garfield Street should be off the table.

Gary Bowles, 28 Burdon Lane. He understands that the Committee has developing thoughts on taking Mill Pond Park property. This is a proposal that people stood in the heat for hours to oppose. This was a concept that was soundly defeated at referendum. The message should have rung loud and clear: Don't touch one inch of our beloved Mill Pond Park. The plan to move the entrance to Town Hall was scrapped due to the cost. CRCOG did not approve the grant to modify Garfield Street as it carried a lesser priority than many more important projects. Straightening out the west end of Garfield Street, where the bus garage is located, is the only part that should be considered. The present curve on Garfield is a safety feature because it slows traffic. The park land should never, ever be touched.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. In the previous minutes it stated that she said that there were three million dollars allocated for the Town Hall Renovation. She didn't mean that amount of money. That is not what it was allocated at. Her main concern this evening is the way people have interpreted what is said around the table. She did not hear any discussion about taking eight feet of park land. Yet, this has sparked a fire. What you don't know is if the referendum was defeated because people did not want a building on the park or they didn't want a building period or if they just didn't want to spend the money. Decision Point LLC's Focus Group Executive Summary pointed out that the

Committee's communications needed to be consistent, honest and interactive. At the last meeting she mentioned about minutes being more clearly defined on the Town's web site and was directed to speak with webmaster Paul Boutot. She attempted to do so earlier today in order to request that the Committee's minutes be placed at the top of the home page. The Town is trying to revamp the home page and the people they are working with now may not be able to revamp it in this manner. She is not making these requests for herself, it is because she has seen other asking. It boggles her mind as she sat through the library board's presentation, with Kaestle Boos, to the Town Council regarding what they would like to see with the library. That communication should have happened two years ago. Communication will be the key to success for this Committee.

IX. Response to Public Participation – As the previous speaker brought up the topic of communication, Mr. Mortensen asked for the floor in order to respond. He has been involved in the Town for thirty years. He values his honesty and his integrity. He is glad he doesn't look at social media. When does what is on social media and what makes it to print become fact? If something is not a fact and untrue, he was always taught it was a lie. During the last project proposal he saw political bickering and volunteered because he knew Town Hall had to be fixed. He has asked tough questions because he feels it is the responsibility of every person on this Committee to look at every facet of this project. He has read the comments from social media, some of which made it to print. These are that we don't need a budget, which is untrue. It was said that we are taking eight feet of Mill Pond; where did that come from? He has seen remarks from two Town Councilors, not Councilors here, that people want to tank this project right off the bat. If that is the case he is happy to step down because he is not going to sit here for a year, putting in all this work when there is a mindset that whatever comes up, we're going to tank it. One Council member stated that the whole Committee concept is an absolute sham job. How does that reflect on everyone sitting on this Committee? Another Council person said that people on this Committee are not being listened to and the Committee is not listening to the public. He listens to every word each person says. He is thick skinned but is upset when his integrity is taken into question. He asked the Mayor for background on Garfield Street. He never said he wanted to take eight feet of Mill Pond. He never said he wanted to straighten out Garfield Street. Comments from members of this Committee: \$30 million is not going to pass. (How do we know what it is and whether it is going to pass?) Mill Pond Park is completely off limits. We (meaning the Committee) really need to listen and respect those who voted No (that is saying that the Committee is not), to focus groups and those who speak during public participation. That is not happening. That is untrue. If you want to call it a lie, you can. Another comment: Please know this, I will continue to fight for "our voices" (he is not sure who those are) to be respected. He has never treated anyone with anything but respect; friends, foes, you name it. Another particular one was: I have to say that the entire straightening of Garfield Street and of the eight feet of park, subcommittees, etc. was so transparent and rehearsed that it was actually quite pitiful and painful to watch. That really upsets him. That is saying that he is a liar, that he had a rehearsed question with the Mayor or anyone else he asked a question of. No matter what your political aspirations or sympathies, who is running for office here? If you had a question, his phone number is listed, he will be happy to talk with anybody and explain something. You may not agree with him but he will be happy

to talk with you about it. If the Council or the public does not want us to fix the Town Hall, let us know. When you take something out of context, like it was said at one time, we don't need a budget, it was the budget at that time because we have only scratched the surface, so everybody is saying how can you renovate the Town Hall, you don't have a budget, you're going to spend all this money; you see where that is going? That is very unfortunate. There are a lot of good people sitting out there who are taking the time to come and listen to the meetings and he has always been an advocate of getting people to come out to meetings. He heartily endorses it. But listen to the facts. Every member of this Committee has a charge to do and search out, to look at, every possibility to fix the Town Hall. Where the entrance is, how it is situated, what we put in here, how many square feet, how much money. We're just scratching at this. He doesn't know if the public is looking to the Committee to solve all the ills in Town. What are we going to do about the Board, what about a bus garage? What about the library? The Committee can't fix everything. The Committee has a charge to fix the Town Hall and he feels the Committee needs to focus on that.

Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi replied that she had received an e-mail from Mr. Przech about straightening Garfield Street which would remove an acre of land from the park, needed for land for the Town Hall complex, resulting in additional, more convenient parking for annually scheduled events. This is where that is all coming from. She had kept quiet and went to Alan (Bongiovanni) who told her to make sure everything was on the record. At one of the Committee's meetings members of the public walked into the meeting and said it was a foregone conclusion when they saw the architects here, that it was already decided. They were right because when she was speaking to Rose and Mady after the meeting Mr. Mortensen and Mr. Bongiovanni were talking and they brought it up to her about how could we not go with them, its free, that type of thing. Then she called them both the day of the meeting, before the meeting. She spoke to Mr. Mortensen and asked if the Committee could at least listen to the public and at least do its due diligence when it comes to an architect because it has been made very clear that everyone wants the Committee to do that. He felt it wasn't necessary to do our due diligence. She then spoke to Mr. Bongiovanni right after that. He assured her that the Committee did not need to do its due diligence and he also said that the Committee would not be voting on it that night. He said that the Committee could wait at least two weeks and that did not happen. If the Committee is going to go about all this and if the Committee is going to be talking about everybody, go ahead. She has nothing to hide. She is here because there are people she believes in and who believe in her and they fought for something. It wasn't just against, first it was taxes and the price. It's a lot of money. The other thing was the park. So, enough. We can read all the e-mails into the record if you like. She has no issue with that, actually. Mr. Przech and she had actually discussed it before the meeting when another letter came through from Newington Travel Basketball and they have asked her to read it into the record for them.

Mr. Przech said, regarding the e-mail he sent to Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi, it was to inquire if the group she represented was against Garfield Street. He wanted to find that out. She said they were, not a square inch, which was fine because he worked out that it would take more like an acre of land. Ms. Jorgensen Bucchi stated that before it was two to

three acres, now it is one, what is the difference? (Response to Public Participation ended here until it was continued at the end of the meeting – Editor)

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – no action was taken.

V. a. Updates on previously discussed items - Hazardous Materials Survey. Mr. Baron stated that Board of Education documents regarding hazardous materials were still outstanding. Ms. Jorgensen Bucchi believed that the report on the Main Level did not include test results for the gym or the auditorium. She believes Federal laws for PCBs have changed. The report does not have a date. There is glue on the ceiling in the gym that she believes contains asbestos. Air quality testing should be done. She does not consider the report to be official. Mr. Nagel felt that some time had passed since the previous survey and that the Committee should consider authorizing a new hazardous material test that is accordance with up to date rules and regulations. Mr. Nagel made a motion that the Committee have a new hazardous materials survey conducted in preparation for the renovation for areas in the entire Town Hall campus where the Committee believes renovation work will be necessary, that is within the purview of this Committee. A second to the motion was made by Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi. Discussion: Mr. Marocchini stated that, as discussed previously, the cost would be around \$40,000. The previous study was done in or around 2007. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt that she would not want to work in a building that isn't safe. Mr. Mortensen asked about the timeframe. Mr. Langdon replied that it would probably be completed in about a month. The money would come out of the Building Committee's budget. The motion passed by a vote of 5 YES to 0 NO.

V. b. Updates on previously discussed items – Space Needs Analysis. No action was taken.

VI. Discussion with other Boards and Commissions – the Board of Education had been invited to the meeting. Kevin Borup of the Board was the only member present. He was not authorized or prepared to make any statements on behalf of the Board. The Board of Parks and Recreation has been invited to the Committee's next meeting. Mr. Baron was directed to invite the Board of Education to the Committee's following subsequent meeting.

VII. Any other Business Pertinent to the Committee – a question was raised with regards to the statues of Committee member Jane Murphy, who had earlier stated an intention to resign. No resignation letter has been received by the Town Clerk as of this date. The Mayor was asked about a replacement. He thought that perhaps those recommending an appointment would go back to those who have already been interviewed. Interested parties should contact Jaime Trevethan in the Town Manager's Office. The Committee confirmed that there next meeting would be held on February 3rd at 6:00 PM. Mr. Nagel knew there might be conflicts with his other commitments, and has one that evening that may require him to be late. The subject of the architect's contract was raised. Mr. Baron has already sent a letter with proposed changes to the original agreement. Mr. Boos stated that he has looked at them and, except for the areas that need further definition that

comprise the components of the project that may need to be left as “to be determined”, his firm is in general agreement with those comments.

VIII. Public Participation – Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi read the letter from Newington Travel Basketball President Michael Johnson dated January 20, 2015, in its totality. That letter is included at the end of these minutes.

Dana Havens, 113 Stoddard Avenue. Social media is a double edged sword. You can't believe everything you read. That is the bad. That it has piqued the interest of our citizens about the project is the good. In her opinion, it outweighs the bad. Will the opinions of the public help or hinder your job? That is up to those of you sitting here. For those who use social media, direct them to the page and paragraph of the minutes or reports. Hold them accountable. On the testing, do we know the company that did it? Could we see if they have a copy, and then test the areas that were omitted from the original test? Perhaps this will reduce our costs. On the Board of Education, can you bring forward some questions that you have so they can be able to answer them at the next meeting? Is there a possibility to re-open the candidates for the vacancy on the Committee because there has been more interest to sit on this Committee since there has been more information about what is going on?

Kevin Borrup, 16 Broadview Street and member of the Board of Education. He was not authorized by the Board to talk about their space needs. The relevant person to do that would be the Superintendent or one of the Superintendent's staff. He appreciates the efforts of the Committee. He thinks they have a hard task. He thanks Ms. Jorgensen-Bucci for reading in the e-mail letter from Newington Travel Basketball and he is sure that between the Town and the Board of Education properties that something could be worked out to accommodate children and the families in the Town. He came this evening to observe, see what the Committee was doing, and hear what the public was saying.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She had previously submitted a series of 26 questions in writing. Many of the answers she received were that the matter was not under the purview of the Committee. Her questions were innocent and tied in to the future. If you don't answer the questions, they were about bringing in areas such as the library, the questions will come up again. The difference between a regular and a special meeting is that you can not add an agenda item to a special meeting. Since the last meeting was a special meeting, how could the Committee elect a Vice Chair when it was not on the agenda? On the vacant slot on the Committee, when a person is appointed to this Committee it does not give them the right to come with another agenda other than to address the charge of the Committee.

Gail Budrejko, 21 Isabelle Terrace. Not much has happened in terms of decision making by the Committee already. She doesn't think it is too late to bring people up to speed. When filling the vacant seat, consider naming some alternates. There is a lot of detail with this project. There was a lot of turnover on the Committee previously.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. One thing that stands out, with hazardous materials, she was told previously there was no problem. There has got to be a study somewhere. All documents for this project should be in a central place. As far back as the Wright administration, renovations were third on the list of priorities. If there were dangerous conditions in the gym, why were they not addressed? When there are discussions with other Boards and Commissions, could it be specified on the agenda which one the Committee will be meeting with as she has specific questions for each that she would like to ask. Lack of continuity was a problem on the previous Building Committee.

Steve Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. The Town has a professional facilities manager. He would like to have that facilities manager implement maintenance on all assets across the Town. He would like him to have the opportunity to implement as he deems appropriate.

Dominic Pane, 638 Church Street. He is glad to see the Committee has decided to use the services of an Industrial Hygienist. Why is this not going out to bid?

Dawn Olivera, 18 Tunxis Road. Is Garfield Street still on the table? Is the Building Committee is capable of fixing our gym or are they waiting for a new master plan? Will someone get back to Mike Johnson?

Mike Hoffman, 15 Locust Drive. He hears lots of excuses for straightening Garfield Street. Someone must have an ulterior motive. If the roof on his house leaked, he would patch it. The Committee should fix the gym roof.

IX. Response to Public Participation (continued) – Mr. Mortensen, on Mike Johnson's letter: This is between the Town Council and the Board of Education. The Project Building Committee has no jurisdiction in scheduling or matters of this nature. The Town does need to start ramping up how it will accommodate departments and those who use the building during construction. Mayor Woods pointed out that at the last meeting he did state that on the straightening of Garfield Street, that he did not know how you would get it to pass. That was lost in translation. Mr. Przech stated that repairs to the gym were under the Facility Manager's purview. On the original hazardous materials report, the company that wrote it is out of business. Mr. Baron stated that the Town now uses EnviroMed for these services. They were selected as the result of a formal competitive process, a Request for Proposals. A new RFP could be issued if the Committee wanted that. The Committee did not feel that was necessary. Mr. Langdon spoke about the leaks in the roof. It is a complex problem given the type of roof over the gym. The roofer nailed through the masonite to install the shingles. There is also no ice dam barrier on the roof. 35 leaks have been repaired over the gym alone. It needs a new roof. That is the only way to fix the roof. He has been putting on patches but the patches aren't holding. He noted that Kaestle Boos had provided an estimate for roofs to the previous Building Committee. Mr. Boos said that the problem was difficult with so many leaks. One possible suggestion is a temporary patch until a decision is reached on replacement of the gym and the entire roof. He can have a person from his office that works on roofing issues look into it. The exploratory work on the lintels and areas of structural concern is not complete but has started. Mr. Przech stated that he had e-mailed Ms. Jorgensen-

Bucchi in order to reach out and to find out where her group stood and what their objections were.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Baron

Jeff Baron
Director of Administrative Services

(The letter from NBTA President Mike Johnson that was read into the record during the meeting follows – Editor)

On Jan 20, 2015, at 1:39 PM, Johnson,Michael P <MPJOHNSO@travelers.com> wrote:

To: Steve Woods - Mayor

Members of Newington Town Council

John Salamone - Town Manager

Lucian Jachimowicz – Chief Finance and Operations Officer

David Langdon - Director of Facilities Management, Town of Newington

Bruce Till - Parks and Recreation Superintendent

Karen Gallicchio - Parks and Recreation Supervisor

Don Woods - Chairperson, Board of Parks and Recreation

Dr. William Collins – Superintendent of Schools

Members of Board of Education

Richard Vida – Director of Maintenance Services

Enzo Zocco – Vice Principal, Newington High School

Sarah Jorgensen – Town Hall Renovations Project Building Committee

To the above Town Officials and Newington Public Schools Officials,

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss with you the status of the Mortensen Community Center (MCC) gymnasium and respectfully ask that you urgently work together to find a viable alternative solution for teams and/or organizations that rely on the MCC gym.

On Sunday, January 18, 2015, Newington Travel Basketball (NTBA) hosted Wethersfield for four games at MCC starting at 3pm. Prior to the first game, the roof was leaking and dripping water near the visitor bleachers. A trash can was placed on the floor to catch the drops. During the last game of the day, another leak emerged, this time dripping water on the court and forcing us to cancel the game.

The result of the cancellation affects NTBA because: (1) we need to find a viable alternative to making up the game when we have limited available time at MCC, (2) we had to pay our referees \$80 for the canceled game because they showed up and the game was in progress and will have to pay another \$80 when the game is rescheduled, (3) we could get kicked out of our league (the CT Boys Travel Basketball League which is the premier travel league in the state and of which we are a founding member) as we were warned about our gym last year when a game also was canceled due to the leaky roof, and (4) we continually get mocked by visiting towns because of our facility.

It is not just Newington Travel Basketball that is impacted. Parks & Rec youth basketball, Men's league, NHS, Emanuel Christian Academy, and others use the MCC gym regularly. Having an inadequate and rundown facility like MCC and having to cancel a game in the middle of the game is an absolute embarrassment for a town of Newington's stature. A first class town should have first class facilities to use. We have incredible facilities at our high school, but they are basically rendered unusable because of the cost we would have to pay for custodians.

Based on prior information I have received, if we used NHS on a Saturday evening or Sunday (when most of our games are), we would have to pay \$700-\$800 each day for custodians. For NTBA, we charge each player \$205 + \$55 uniform (if needed) which covers costs of gym rental, referees, shooting shirt, miscellaneous team equipment, and a

banquet at the end of the year. This cost includes ~\$5,000 in fundraising that we do each year. If we were to pay the additional fees to use the schools for games, it would cost an additional \$14,000-\$16,000 per year for our organization which equates to \$150-\$200 per player per year based on a schedule with 20-24 home games between boys' and girls' teams. We would not be able to fundraise all of the additional cost and Newington parents would not be able to afford our program. The result would be the end of Newington Travel Basketball (an organization that has been around for 30+ years) and ultimately would impact the quality of basketball at Newington High School.

I am not a politician nor do I work for the Board of Ed or sit on any town committees. What I am is a lifelong Newington resident, a parent of four kids, and a volunteer who is working with other volunteers in trying to improve our NTBA organization and give boys and girls in Newington an opportunity to play competitive basketball (because we do not have middle school sports in town).

My simple viewpoint is the following ...

- Of the 12 town members in our boys league, 11 of them (Newington is the only exception) play games at schools in their towns and 9 of them play at their high school.
- Of the 18 town members in our girls league, 16 of them play games at schools in their towns with about 10-12 of them playing games at their high school.
- There is no reason why we should not be able to use Newington High School.
- Newington has a flawed system in place – union contracts, facilities management, lack of clear and/or good working relationships between town departments – that prevent the use of our schools at a reasonable cost to organizations that benefit the kids in the town of Newington.
- I don't know who drives the decisions around the use of the schools and the fees that are charged. It has never been clear to us as an organization and hence I am including as many people as possible in this email because my understanding is that each of you play some part in the process of allowing groups to use the facilities in town.

This system needs to change. We cannot wait for a new community center to be built. Action is needed now. I don't know what the right answer is, but there has to be options.

- Spend the money needed to fix the roof of MCC immediately. This should be an absolute no-brainer and quite frankly is astonishing that it has not been done yet.

- Modify the custodial contracts so that someone is staffed at the school(s) on Sunday during basketball season?
- Eliminate the requirement to have two custodians for a game (our coaches currently assist P&R staff in setting up before and cleaning up after games)
- Reduce the fees for organizations that benefit the kids in Newington.
- Allow P&R to staff NHS on Sundays as they do MCC and cut off access to everything (Cafeteria, locker rooms, hallway to classrooms) except gym and bathrooms.
- Talk to other towns and ask how they handle the use of school gyms and custodians on weekends.

In summary, I am not sure which of you is the decision-maker, but I am asking you to get together and identify a solution that will work for organizations in town like Newington Travel Basketball which rely on the use of MCC today. I truly hope that this letter will not be ignored because you believe someone else will deal with it and also hope that action will be taken soon. Mortensen Community Center is almost unusable, especially in bad weather, and now is the time to make a decision on a tactical short-term solution to help the kids in our town.

I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you.

Mike Johnson

NTBA President

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